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New York

Chairman: Mr. Garcia . . . . . (Colombia)

The meeting was called to order at 10.10 a.m.

General exchange of views (*continued*)

Mr. Rider (New Zealand): Let me begin, Mr. Chairman, by congratulating you and your colleagues in the Bureau on your election to office this year in the Disarmament Commission. We are confident that the Commission is in good hands and look forward to working with you on the items on our agenda.

In these opening remarks I just want to make a few very general comments on those agenda items, in advance of the more detailed views New Zealand will be offering in the various Working Groups.

First, on the question of nuclear-weapon-free zones: for New Zealand, and indeed for the whole of the South Pacific, the signature of the Protocols to the Treaty of Rarotonga by France, the United States and the United Kingdom in March 1996 was most welcome. It was the culmination of 10 years of effort, and meant that our region was finally free of nuclear weapons.

The signature of the Rarotonga Protocols is only one of a number of recent developments which demonstrate that nuclear-weapon-free zones now have real momentum. In April 1996 in Cairo the African Nuclear-Weapon-Free Zone Treaty was opened for signature. The 10 countries of South-East Asia have ratified the Treaty on the Southeast Asia Nuclear-Weapon Free Zone. And important steps have been taken to consolidate the Treaty of Tlatelolco.

These developments, as well as the increasing attention to establishing zones in the Middle East and in Central Asia, reflect acknowledgment of and support for nuclear-weapon-free zones as a means of expressing and promoting commonly held values in the areas of nuclear disarmament, arms control and non-proliferation. At the same time, nuclear-weapon-free zones can assist in building regional confidence and security. Each treaty is unique, reflecting the needs of the region concerned. More stringent requirements than those accepted under global regimes such as the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons (NPT) can be included in individual treaties.

These are developments which give New Zealand, a long-time proponent of nuclear-weapon-free zones, great satisfaction. Taken together, the four existing and prospective zones potentially include some 114 nations. With the addition of Antarctica, demilitarized under the Antarctic Treaty, they cover more than 50 per cent of the Earth's land mass. Virtually all of the southern hemisphere, and significant parts of the northern hemisphere, are now covered by nuclear-weapon-free zones.

Like a number of other Governments, New Zealand sees potential to build on this in a way which reinforces progress towards nuclear disarmament. The differing provisions of each treaty may make the creation of formal legal linkages complex and difficult, but we see scope for developing political links between the four existing or potential nuclear-weapon-free zones. New Zealand therefore welcomed and actively supported the initiative Brazil took in New York at the fifty-first session of the

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General Assembly to promote linkages and cooperation between the nuclear-weapon-free zones through a General Assembly resolution. We saw this as an important first step which should lead to increased links and cooperation between nuclear-weapon-free zones. New Zealand, both nationally and with like-minded colleagues, is ready to propose for this Commission's consideration further steps to achieve that goal.

Secondly, I turn to the item on a fourth special session of the General Assembly devoted to disarmament, consideration of which will take place against the background of General Assembly resolution 51/45 C. In that resolution, the decision to convene a Preparatory Committee was made subject to the outcome of deliberations at this session of our Commission. The question now is whether a consensus on the objectives and agenda for the special session can be reached over the next two and a half weeks in the Disarmament Commission and at the meetings of the Preparatory Committee, so that the decision to hold the special session in 1999 can be confirmed.

We hope that this can be achieved. New Zealand does not see it as in the interests of the overall disarmament and arms control agenda for any country to stand in the way of a special session which could provide an efficient structure for disarmament efforts as we move into the twenty-first century. Over the next weeks, therefore, we need to build upon the welcome signs of flexibility which were shown by so many delegations last year during the fifty-first session of the General Assembly.

Crucial to that is a demonstration that the special session will deliver a substantive and balanced outcome. We do not see this as being an insuperable obstacle. In the working paper New Zealand submitted last year (A/CN.10/1996/WG.II/WP.5) we set out our views on the objectives of a fourth special session on disarmament, and a possible draft agenda, which included both nuclear and conventional items, and the disarmament negotiating machinery. Such a holistic approach is, we believe, necessary if the special session is to develop practical programmes on which nations can draw to assist their own disarmament efforts.

The third item, on guidelines on conventional arms control/limitation and disarmament, is one of considerable significance, particularly in terms of its emphasis on the consolidation of peace through practical disarmament measures. We see this item as a logical progression from the discussions in previous years on illicit arms transfers. The Disarmament Commission then noted that the negative effect of this traffic was disproportionately large, and that the trade should be eliminated.

Efforts to that end begin at the national level. New Zealand, for example, participates in the Wassenaar Arrangement, and implements national controls on strategic exports, including small arms. Coordination between States, at both the global and the regional levels, is also crucial. One way in which this can happen is for regional organizations to look at ways in which they can support global disarmament regimes, as mandated by the Secretary-General's "An Agenda for Peace". New Zealand has given its encouragement to discussions along these lines in the context of the Regional Forum of the Association of South-East Asian Nations. And at the global level there is a need for Security Council mandates for peacekeeping operations to provide guidance on activities, such as demining, which contribute to the consolidation of peace.

New Zealand supports a coordinated approach to these problems. We think there is a valuable role for the Disarmament Commission to play in considering the broader framework for the implementation of these and other sorts of practical disarmament measures. Through our deliberations here in this Commission we can improve the capacity of the international community to ensure the maintenance and consolidation of peace and security in areas that have suffered long from conflicts.

We look forward to a substantive, and hopefully positive, discussion on all those agenda issues at this session.

Mr. Enkhsaikhan (Mongolia): I would like to begin, Sir, by extending to you our warmest congratulations on your well deserved election as Chairman of the Disarmament Commission. My delegation is confident that the Commission will successfully cope with the tasks before it, benefitting from your rich knowledge and experience in disarmament affairs. My felicitations go also to the other members of the Bureau, as well as to the chairman of Working Group III. It is in the Working Groups that the bulk of the Commission's work is to be carried out.

The Mongolian delegation welcomes the adoption of the agenda for the current session, which includes important topical items. We look forward to their serious and business-like consideration, which would contribute to disarmament efforts. This would be in conformity with

the role the Disarmament Commission is called upon to play,

> "as the specialized, deliberative body within the United Nations multilateral disarmament machinery that allows for in-depth deliberations on specific disarmament issues, leading to the submission of concrete recommendations on those issues". *(resolution 51/47 B, para. 6)*

It is no coincidence that the Disarmament Commission has on its agenda the consideration of the question of nuclear-weapon-free zones, since the importance of such zones is increasing concurrently with the increase of the areas of their actual and potential zones of coverage.

Mongolia welcomes the creation of nuclear-weapon-free zones in various parts of the world, as well as the ongoing efforts to establish new ones on the basis of arrangements freely arrived at among the States of the region or subregion concerned. We also support the creation of additional nuclear-weapon-free zones wherever necessary and feasible. In this regard, we believe that, given the region's importance for overall peace and security, the Middle East should be turned into such a zone, in accordance with the interest of the overwhelming majority of the members of the international community.

As a State situated in the heart of Asia, and bearing in mind the subregion's strategic location, Mongolia has been making efforts to promote the creation of such a zone in Central Asia. The consultations that Mongolia undertook together with Kyrgyzstan during the last session of the General Assembly demonstrated that this idea is finding support within the United Nations community and that further consultations are needed, especially with the nuclear-weapon States. We are pleased that those who were somehow hesitant last year are now embracing the idea and even wholeheartedly pushing the initiative. Mongolia is prepared to work closely with these and other interested States to materialize the idea.

The Twelfth Ministerial Conference of the Movement of Non-Aligned Countries in New Delhi recently declared its support for Mongolia's efforts, as declared in 1992, to institutionalize its status as a nuclear-weapon-free zone.

Our initiative was welcomed and supported by all five nuclear-weapon States, including Mongolia's two neighbouring nuclear powers, China and Russia. It has also been welcomed by the entire membership of the Non-Aligned Movement, some Western European States, Japan and others. This overwhelming support shows that the notion of a single-State zone is not only politically possible but also quite acceptable.

By declaring its vast territory of 1.565 million square kilometres a nuclear-weapon-free zone, Mongolia is not only trying to ensure its security by political means, but it is also making its policy clear and predictable, thus contributing to reinforcing stability in its strategically sensitive and delicate region.

The assurances given by the five nuclear-weapon States to Mongolia are in themselves an expression of support for the concept of a single-State zone. Nevertheless, to be credible the zone cannot be based only on unilateral declarations of support, especially when they are not identical, contain different language and contain different conditions and reservations. Also, unlike legally binding commitments, unilateral declarations are susceptible to changes of heart or of mind. A nuclear-weapon-free zone can be credible only when it has a sound legal basis and when parties to the agreement have legally defined rights and obligations.

Compared to existing zones, the single-State zone has its obvious advantages: the geographical scope of the zone is a priori well-defined; there is also no need for intra-zonal negotiations or coordination; the parties responsible are apparent; and so on. An essential element is that the zonal State should not have any territorial or border issues with its neighbours. However well-intentioned they may be, it is very important for such zones, just as for any other zones, to have the acquiescence, if not the support, of nuclear-weapon and neighbouring States. As to the form, the international agreement itself could incorporate the negative and positive security assurances and the commitment of nuclear-weapon States not to contribute to or connive in any act that would in fact violate the status of the zone.

These elements could form the basis of the guidelines for drawing the legal framework of single-State zones. The working group that we established yesterday to consider the item could, in our view, consider this question at its meetings and perhaps come up with some ideas, general guidelines or even recommendations for the General Assembly on this question, as envisaged in paragraphs 6 and 7 of its resolution 51/47 B. With this in mind, my delegation intends to submit a working paper for the Working Group's consideration.

Turning to other items on the agenda, I would like to underline that Mongolia fully supports the convening of the fourth special session of the General Assembly devoted to disarmament (SSOD IV). Its position on SSOD IV has been generally reflected in the statements of the Non-Aligned Movement (NAM) on the subject. Nevertheless, my delegation would like to make a few observations.

We believe that SSOD IV can be convened in 1999, as suggested by the overwhelming majority of the Member States. It seems that the suggested timing takes into account other major disarmament agendas that are envisaged. It is to be hoped that, given the short time left, all delegations will work constructively towards attaining consensus on this item in order to allow preparations for the special session to commence this year.

In the view of my delegation, the objectives of SSOD IV should include, *inter alia*, the following.

First, it should include an assessment of the present situation in the field of disarmament. It is important to take into account the post-cold-war situation and the clear need for a different approach towards security.

Secondly, it should include the reaffirmation of the central role of the United Nations in the multilateral disarmament process.

Thirdly, it should include the setting of the disarmament agenda for the twenty-first century. Charting a framework for future disarmament measures should be the most important part of the whole undertaking. It is important to come to a general agreement on a phased programme for the reduction and eventual elimination of nuclear-weapon stockpiles. The special session can provide a valuable stimulus to further measures in the reduction of conventional weapons and in developing confidence-building measures.

I would like to note here that my delegation does not view the special session only in the context of nuclear disarmament. It should be emphasized, however, that further significant progress in conventional disarmament is possible only in the context of nuclear disarmament. In this connection, we fully share the view that its agenda should be balanced between nuclear and conventional disarmament issues.

The special session will certainly have financial implications for the United Nations. We are afraid, however, that a reference to that might not be comprehended, especially by the world public, given the astronomical sums being spent on armaments. The convening of SSOD IV will be meaningful only if all States commit themselves to its success.

Conventional arms control constitutes an indispensable part of disarmament efforts and is highly important in promoting regional and international peace and security. In the view of my delegation, its role is bound to increase in the post-cold-war security environment.

The Mongolian delegation considers the main objective of conventional arms control and reduction to be to help States set the balance of their defence capabilities at the lowest level of armaments. Micro-disarmament can lead to, and be complemented by, practical disarmament measures, such as control and disposal of arms, especially small arms and light weapons, restraints over their production, procurement and transfer, conversion, and other measures relating to confidence-building. The adoption last year of the "Guidelines for international arms transfers in the context of General Assembly resolution 46/36 H, of 6 December 1991", was a commendable development. The continued operation of the United Nations Register of Conventional Arms, and the improvement of its effectiveness, would be important practical steps conducive to conventional disarmament.

In conclusion, my delegation would like to emphasize that conventional arms control and disarmament can be truly effective if they address the root causes of instability and serve the interests of development. We hope that consideration of this new item in this Commission will lead to practical disarmament measures and thus strengthen regional and global stability.

Mr. Izquierdo (Ecuador) (*interpretation from Spanish*): I should like at the outset to express to you, Sir, the sincere congratulations of my delegation on your election as Chairman of the Disarmament Commission for this substantive session, and to assure your of our readiness to cooperate with you in making your stewardship a success. We also congratulate all the members of the Bureau. Through you, my delegation would also like to congratulate Ambassador Hoffmann for the magnificent job he did in directing the work of the Commission last year.

Ecuador firmly supports the non-proliferation regime and the establishment of nuclear-weapon-free zones. That is why we were among those who led the drive to bring

about the Treaty of Tlatelolco, which served as an example to ensure that other areas could be free from the threat of these weapons. We should like to express our satisfaction at the recent celebration of the thirtieth anniversary of the opening for signature of this important international instrument.

Ecuador would like to place on record its support for General Assembly resolution 51/45 B, entitled "The nuclear-weapon-free southern hemisphere and adjacent areas", introduced by Brazil, which, in essence, calls for the consolidation of the regime established across an extensive area of the world by the Treaties of Tlatelolco, Rarotonga, Bangkok, Pelindaba and the Antarctic. The objectives of that resolution deserve the consensus support of the international community. My delegation would like to reaffirm the importance of those Treaties, and we have consequently supported the establishment of nuclear-weapon-free zones in other regions.

Ecuador supports the holding of the fourth special session of the General Assembly devoted to disarmament in 1999, as agreed. To this end, all delegations must allow practical progress to be made in deliberations in order to ensure the success of the session. For this reason, Ecuador is especially eager to ensure that the agenda will deal, in a relevant way, with the issues related to conventional disarmament, and that they are thoroughly developed.

My delegation wishes to support the proposals put forward in this regard by the Movement of Non-Aligned Countries at the last substantive session of the Disarmament Commission, which called for the special session to have a wide-ranging agenda highlighting the following: review and evaluation of the current international situation; nuclear disarmament at the global and regional levels; elimination of other weapons of mass destruction; effective reduction of arms and armed forces; the relationship between disarmament and development; and confidence-building.

My delegation attaches the highest priority to the need for the United Nations to deal in a more extensive and responsible manner with the issue of conventional weapons. We are thus very satisfied at the Disarmament Commission's decision to include a new item on its agenda, entitled "Guidelines on conventional arms control/limitation and disarmament, with particular emphasis on consolidation of peace in the context of General Assembly resolution 51/45 N". This exercise must produce results that have a practical impact on conflict resolution and the consolidation of peace.

The question of anti-personnel mines in all its aspects, including demining, must be of interest to all States, mainly because of its humanitarian implications. States that produce and export anti-personnel mines have a greater degree of responsibility, as they have derived huge economic benefits from their sale. Furthermore, the companies involved in this business possess necessary the technology and human resources for demining.

In this context, Ecuador regrets that there are situations involving aggression by one or more States against other States, compelling the parties that are attacked to use what methods are available to defend their sovereignty and territorial integrity, in accordance with Article 51 of the Charter of the United Nations, relating to the right to legitimate self-defence. It is therefore indispensable for all sides to recognize their responsibility and cooperate in the work of removing these devices so as to prevent them from taking their toll, especially on civilian populations not involved in armed conflict. Ecuador is a contracting party to all the international instruments that prohibit and restrict the use of these weapons. We are in favour of achieving a total ban on the use, production, stockpiling and transfer of anti-personnel landmines. In this connection, in 1995 Ecuador declared a moratorium on the transfer of such weapons.

The delegation of Ecuador attaches the highest priority to all the norms of international humanitarian law, including those that inspired the conclusion of the Convention on Prohibitions or Restrictions on the Use of Certain Conventional Weapons Which May Be Deemed to Be Excessively Injurious or to Have Indiscriminate Effects, as well as its Protocols. Ecuador is a contracting party to all of those instruments.

My country has steadfastly promoted general and complete disarmament, and is consequently a party to all global and regional disarmament instruments. We believe that a greater level of transparency will contribute to building confidence and security between States. Ecuador invites all States to participate effectively in the implementation of all measures designed to achieve disarmament, not on the basis of declarations, but through tangible actions and objectives. Only a genuine pro-disarmament attitude will contribute to achieving the objectives of the so-called consolidation of peace through the adoption of concrete disarmament measures.

Ecuador is greatly concerned by the continued tendencies and actions relating to the acquisition and unjustified accumulation of armaments, which threaten

international security and jeopardize the processes of peace, dialogue and negotiation. The international community must remain alert and take action to deal with this. In this regard, my country attaches particular importance the United Nations Register of Conventional Arms and has presented reports on the subject.

The quest for the peaceful resolution of disputes through dialogue and negotiation is a mainstay of the foreign policy of Ecuador. We are therefore strongly opposed to the threat, direct or veiled, of the use of force in international relations. My country is convinced that it is more important to achieve development for the people than to accumulate conventional arms on an unjustifiable basis. That is why we are committed to devoting our economic resources to resolving social problems and achieving sustainable human development.

There is a very close link between peace, collective security, integrated development and international law, all of which are essential components of a stable international order. No one will be able to feel safe and secure if dialogue and negotiation do not once and for all replace confrontation and war, or if the potential for the development of peoples is thwarted, threatening their stability and democracy. Peaceful coexistence is therefore an imperative necessity in international relations.

Mr. Vachon (Canada) (*interpretation from French*): On behalf of the Canadian delegation, Sir, I should like to congratulate you on your assumption of the chairmanship of the Commission and to assure you of our full support. I should like also to welcome the elected Chairman of the Working Group, as I shall also welcome those still to be appointed. They too will have our confidence and our cooperation.

The agenda before us is both varied and interesting, embracing complex issues, and the Canadian delegation looks forward to contributing to the discussion in each area. If we approach this deliberative forum in a spirit of dialogue and work towards common ground, it will afford us the opportunity to explore different perspectives rather than holding on to immovable national positions.

(*spoke in English*)

With regard to nuclear-weapon-free zones, it is propitious that we are embarking upon such a discussion in this body in this, the thirtieth anniversary year of the Treaty of Tlatelolco. That example has justifiably earned credit for those who had the foresight to take such an important matter into their own hands.

Canada has already availed itself of the opportunity to speak on the issue of nuclear-weapon-free zones during the recent Preparatory Committee session on the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons (NPT); but it is our view, given the fact that the NPT does not yet enjoy universal membership, that some of these thoughts bear repeating in this forum. Canada welcomes and encourages progress to develop and implement nuclear-weapon-free-zone agreements consistent with the Charter of the United Nations, international law and internationally agreed criteria. The establishment of additional nuclear-weapon-free zones, on the basis of arrangements freely arrived at among the States concerned, particularly in regions beset by conflicts, enhances regional and global peace and security and contributes to non-proliferation and disarmament. We also encourage adherence by the nuclear-weapon States to nuclear-weapon-free-zone arrangements.

Canada supports the countries of Africa, Latin America and the Caribbean, and the South Pacific in concluding various nuclear-weapon-free-zone treaties. Of course, we welcome the support of the nuclear-weapon States that have signed the relevant protocols. We also welcome the consensus in the General Assembly on an annual resolution urging the "Establishment of a nuclear-weapon-free zone in the region of the Middle East". We would be remiss were we not also to highlight the progress made in South-East Asia in this context, as represented by the Bangkok Treaty.

The prospects for regional initiatives, in keeping with international law and internationally agreed criteria, have clearly not been exhausted. For example, we note with interest the signing of the Almaty Declaration — adopted by the leaders of Kazakstan, Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan, Turkmenistan and Uzbekistan — which calls for the establishment of a nuclear-weapon-free zone in Central Asia. Canada joins with others in welcoming such initiatives.

We look forward to hearing of the experiences of others, and we believe that we should remain open-minded and be prepared to consider any new concepts which might emerge to advance this broad concept. It is, of course, clear that any such proposals should continue to meet the basic criteria of acceptability to the countries of the region and promotion of regional and international security. To help promote this discussion, my delegation

will distribute a paper entitled "Nuclear-weapon-free zones: A comparative perspective". Perhaps somewhat wide-ranging, it does not necessarily reflect Canada's national position. We are hopeful that it will help enrich our deliberations.

We have an equally open mind in addressing the agenda item on the United Nations special session devoted to disarmament. In particular, we maintain that these deliberations should point the way to an appropriate framework and balanced agenda that would attract consensus. This is necessary if we are to convene a special session that can make a meaningful contribution to the world's work on disarmament, as envisaged in the relevant General Assembly resolution. It is in this working group that we plan to distribute a second paper of a more general nature, entitled "Criteria for evaluating potential agreements or measures to control arms and promote stability". We do believe that it may have a wider interest, however, including in the two other subject areas on our agenda.

On the topic of consolidation of peace, we very much appreciate the preparatory work that has been done, particularly by the German delegation, with a view to focusing our efforts. We should not be surprised that our work will likely intersect in some instances with certain aspects of what is already under consideration — for example, in the United Nations Panel of Governmental Experts on Small Arms. The broadening of our agenda becomes clear in this topic, and in our discussions we should ensure that we remain open and sensitive to the important work being done in other areas of the United Nations and in regional organizations. My delegation will distribute a third paper, dedicated to this topic, later in this session. I look forward to having the opportunity to introduce it in the Working Group at that time.

The Commission can count on the support and practical contribution of my delegation.

Mr. Chowdhury (Bangladesh): My delegation is pleased to see you, Sir, chairing this important session of the Disarmament Commission. Our warmest congratulations go to you and to the other members of the Bureau.

We are living through a time of change and challenge. The end of ideological antagonisms has had a salutary impact on the international security environment. The present time is thus more propitious than any in the past for addressing, in substance, security and disarmament issues. This lends importance and also a sense of urgency to the task that lies ahead of us and is reflected in this session's agenda.

We have before us an agenda of three substantive items, of which two are new, and we would like to share our general thoughts on these three agenda items. Bangladesh believes that recent developments on nuclear-weapon-free zones are significant and will have far-reaching consequences in strengthening nuclear non-proliferation and disarmament. The recent celebration of the thirtieth anniversary of the Treaty of Tlatelolco is testimony of the commitment of the signatory Member States to a nuclear-weapon-free zone. In March 1996 we noted that the United Kingdom, the United States and France signed the Treaty of Rarotonga. In April 1996 we witnessed the signing of the Pelindaba Treaty by over 40 African countries, and the signing of its Protocols by all the nuclear-weapon States.

We also witnessed the Treaty of Bangkok on the South-East Asia Nuclear-Weapon-Free Zone enter into force last month. Bangladesh stands in admiration of these positive developments. Bangladesh has more than once reiterated its policy of commitment to the concept and principle of nuclear-weapon-free zones and zones of peace. The total elimination of nuclear weapons is our professed goal. It is our view that nuclear-weapon-free zones can supplement global efforts towards our ultimate objective of a world free from all nuclear threats.

The agenda item on guidelines on conventional arms control/limitation and disarmament calls for serious deliberations at this session. We have noted that weapons of mass destruction naturally received more attention in public forums than did so-called conventional arms. And yet, excessive accumulations of such arms, not commensurate with the legitimate security concerns of a country, can also be a major destabilizing factor. Many millions of casualties in wars and conflicts have, since 1945, been caused by conventional weapons. It has often been expressed that developing countries in particular should exercise utmost restraint in respect of defence expenditures so as to ensure that procurement does not exceed legitimate security requirements. We are not encouraged when we find that, in 1996, military expenditure as a share of gross domestic product stayed constant for most countries of the world. Economy in the defence sector would mean more funds for the development sector. However, such a prescription, to be effective and realistic, should impose restrictions and constraints on arms-exporting countries. It is perhaps not realistic to expect producers not to manufacture what they

can profitably sell and also not to consolidate markets through persuasion and liberal incentives.

The agenda item on the fourth special session of the General Assembly devoted to disarmament has been a bone of contention in earlier sessions of this Commission. Bangladesh believes that the fourth special session needs to be held to cover the whole range of disarmament issues, aiming for a balance between those related to nuclear weapons and conventional arms. Such a session will indeed help the establishment of common understanding leading to further progress in all disarmament issues. Budgetary constraints notwithstanding, Bangladesh believes that such a session could be useful in furthering the cause of total and complete disarmament. This session would, hopefully, focus on the issue of dates and agenda items and successfully arrive at a much-desired consensus through the cooperation of all concerned.

Bangladesh believes that the Disarmament Commission, in its deliberations in the coming days, will live up to the expectations of all of us. Bangladesh will extend its unstinting support to you, Sir, in your efforts for the success of the 1997 substantive session.

Before I conclude, my delegation would like to inform the Commission that we have just received the good news that the cabinet of the Government of Bangladesh last night ratified the Chemical Weapons Convention.

Mr. Mekprayoonthong (Thailand): First of all, allow me, on behalf of my delegation, to congratulate you, Sir, on your election as the Chairman of the Disarmament Commission at its 1997 session. I also wish to extend my congratulations to the other members of the Bureau. Let me assure you of the full support of the delegation of Thailand during the deliberations under your guidance this session.

This year, the Disarmament Commission began its annual meeting at a very appropriate time, when the issues of arms controls and disarmament have captured worldwide interest. Late last year, we witnessed the conclusion and adoption of the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty (CTBT). Just last week, the States Parties to the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons (NPT) concluded the first meeting of the Preparatory Committee of the 2000 Review Conference. In one week's time, the Chemical Weapons Convention will enter into force. My delegation hopes that, during this current session of the Disarmament Commission, member States will work together to fulfil the important role of the Commission as a forum for taking stock, exchanging views and making recommendations on disarmament issues.

Disarmament is a wide-ranging area to cover. Thailand believes that every country can contribute towards disarmament to make the world a safer and better place to live in. As the depository country of the South-East Asia Nuclear-Weapon-Free Zone Treaty, Thailand feels it is obliged to make this brief statement on this particular issue, as our contribution to the Commission.

The establishment of a nuclear-weapon-free zone has been commonly accepted as a significant contribution towards the ultimate objective of achieving a world entirely free of nuclear weapons. On 15 December 1995, leaders of 10 countries in South-East Asia — Brunei Darussalam, Cambodia, Indonesia, Laos, Malaysia, Myanmar, Philippines, Singapore, Thailand and Viet Nam — gathered in Bangkok and signed the South-East Asia Nuclear-Weapon-Free Zone Treaty. The Treaty of Bangkok, a truly South-East Asian treaty, is the first treaty jointly concluded by all 10 countries of the region. The Treaty basically contains three main objectives: the reaffirmation of the 10 countries regarding obligations assumed under the NPT; the guarantee of the right to use nuclear energy for peaceful purposes; and the safeguarding of the environment from nuclear waste. The Treaty recognizes and respects the rights of other States, consistent with the Charter of the United Nations and in accordance with international law in general and the United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea of 1982 in particular, including respect for freedom of the high seas and rights of innocent passage, archipelagic sea lanes passage or transit passage of ships and aircraft.

According to article 16, the Treaty shall enter into force on the date of the deposit of the seventh instrument of ratification with Thailand, which has been designated as the Depository State. Four weeks ago, on 27 March 1997, Cambodia and Singapore deposited their instrument of ratification and became the seventh and eighth States Parties to the Treaty. Consequently, the Bangkok Treaty entered into force on that day. Earlier, Laos, Myanmar, Malaysia, Brunei Darussalam, Vietnam and Thailand had ratified the Treaty. Arrangements are being made to register the Treaty with the United Nations, pursuant to Article 102 of the United Nations Charter. The Commission will soon be established and convened. It will comprise the Foreign Ministers of States Parties, who will oversee the implementation of the Treaty.

As with other nuclear-weapon-free-zone arrangements, a Protocol is attached to the Bangkok Treaty. The Protocol is open for signature by the five nuclear-weapon States. As stated in the Principles and Objectives for Nuclear Non-Proliferation and Disarmament adopted at the 1995 Review and Extension Conference of the NPT, the cooperation of all the nuclear-weapon States and their respect and support for the relevant protocols is necessary for the maximum effectiveness of such nuclear-weapon-free zones.

In this assembly, where disarmament is the issue, I would like to urge the five nuclear-weapon States to endorse the Protocol to the Bangkok Treaty. The intention of the South-East Asian countries was simply to create a legal system to guarantee a politically and environmentally safe, stable and secure surrounding to their peoples. It is our hope that the five nuclear States will join us in contributing towards the strengthening of regional security and the enhancement of international peace and security as a whole.

Allow me to take this opportunity to welcome the initiatives of the five Central Asian States on the establishment of a nuclear-weapon-free zone in Central Asia. Their efforts will certainly contribute to those of the international community to create a world less at risk from nuclear holocaust. I look forward to the future meeting of this Disarmament Commission in which we hear of a world free of nuclear weapons — soon, I hope. But until then, I wish members all the best; they can always count on our cooperation.

Mr. Pham Quang Vinh (Viet Nam): First may I extend to you, Sir, my delegation's warmest congratulations on your election to the chairmanship of this important Commission. You deserve our full confidence and support.

The United Nations, in our view, has a central and primary responsibility in the sphere of disarmament. In this context, my delegation attaches great importance to the work of the Commission. It is a welcome note for this year that agreement has been reached through extensive consultations to include three important substantive items on the agenda of the Commission. They deserve our careful consideration.

My delegation supports the inclusion on the agenda of the new item entitled "Establishment of nuclear-weapon-free zones on the basis of arrangements freely arrived at among the States of the region concerned". We share the conviction that the establishment of nuclear-weapon-free zones contributes greatly to the enhancement of international peace and security. The world has witnessed commendable efforts in this regard. The Treaty of Tlatelolco, establishing the first nuclear-weapon-free zone in the world, will be 30 years old this year. Three others have been established through the Treaties of Rarotonga, Pelindaba and Bangkok. Our analysis and development of the relevant guidelines will benefit from these experiences.

Those regional efforts should be supported. The recognition by the nuclear-weapon States of the nuclear-weapon-free zones is of great importance. The representative of Thailand, the Depositary State of the Bangkok Treaty, has apprised the Commission of the recent important developments related to the Treaty. Now that the Treaty of Bangkok has entered into force, we expect and hope that the current consultations will lead to early signature by the nuclear-weapon States of its relevant Protocol. With Tlatelolco, Rarotonga, Pelindaba and Bangkok in place, we have the prospect of a nuclear-weapon-free southern hemisphere. We believe that efforts and measures should be taken to consolidate them.

Viet Nam strongly supports the total elimination of nuclear weapons. In the present political and security environment, greater efforts towards nuclear disarmament should and can be made. While we welcome the reductions undertaken by the nuclear-weapon States of their nuclear arsenals, we also believe that it would be best and is possible speedily to achieve a world totally free from nuclear weapons. In the current strengthened review process of the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons (NPT), it should be ensured that all obligations under the Treaty as well as commitments made in the decisions and resolution adopted in 1995 be upheld.

My delegation supports the early convening of the fourth special session devoted to disarmament. We believe that, with serious consideration and greater effort, we can arrive at a general agreement at the current session of the Commission on the framework for this session and that the preparatory process for the special session can thus begin. The first special session adopted important documents that have contributed greatly to our common cause in the field of disarmament. Since then, the world has undergone dramatic changes and, with the end of the cold war, new opportunities and challenges have emerged. The forthcoming special session should take stock of related developments in the political and security environment, review the implementation of the

recommendations and Programme of Action adopted by the first session and, from that, make further and comprehensive recommendations in the field of disarmament as we approach the twenty-first century. We believe that this will be of great importance to the world as a whole.

The Commission has made significant progress with regard to the question of guidelines on conventional arms, with particular emphasis on consolidation of peace. The achievements of the Commission are commendable. We also share the concern over the illicit trade in arms and believe that measures need to be taken to prevent this. We welcome the adoption of the new Protocol to the Chemical Weapons Convention (CWC) and efforts should be made to ensure its effectiveness. We should also continue to make the current United Nations Register on arms transfers more effective.

A lot of work remains before us. It is our belief that further results can be achieved through a process of cooperative and collective efforts with a view to arriving at a convergence of views. In my delegation's view, we should continue to work to further strengthen the Commission. We believe that, with your vast knowledge, experience and skill, Mr. Chairman, you will guide our work to a successful outcome. In this common endeavour, my delegation will cooperate fully with you and all delegations.

Organization of work

The Chairman: The Bureau of the Commission held a meeting this morning at which the working timetable for the period 21-25 April was discussed. The timetable, contained in Informal Paper No. 1, has been distributed.

If there are no comments, I shall take it that the Commission wishes to adopt Informal Paper No. 1.

It was so decided.

The Chairman: As I mentioned yesterday, next week's timetable will be decided upon by the Bureau in consultation with the Chairmen of the Working Groups and will be distributed at the meeting of the Committee of the Whole on Monday.

In another matter which I should like to bring to the Commission's attention, Prime Minister Kurt Beck of the German Federal State of Rhineland-Palatinate will visit the United Nations on 28 April 1997 and has asked to be allowed to address the Commission at an informal meeting of this body.

If I hear no objection, I should like to invite the Prime Minister to address the meeting of the Committee of the Whole, which we would schedule for Monday, 28 April, at 11 a.m.

It was so decided.

The meeting rose at 11.10 a.m.

United Nations A/CN.10/PV.212

General Assembly

Official Records

Disarmament Commission

212th Meeting

Tuesday, 22 April 1997, 3 p.m.

New York

Chairman: Mr. García ..... (Colombia)

The meeting was called to order at 3.10 p.m.

General exchange of views (*continued*)

Ms. Ramírez (Argentina) (*interpretation from Spanish*): On behalf of my delegation, and on my own account, I warmly congratulate Ambassador Andelfo García of Colombia and the other members of the Bureau on their elections at this session of the Disarmament Commission.

This session provides an appropriate framework for us to consider the important tasks before the international community. In an excellent article published in the April edition of *Current History*, Mr. Jack Mendelsohn alerted us to the danger of believing that the disappearance of the threat of nuclear war and the progress achieved in the sphere of disarmament and non-proliferation have made the items on our agenda any less important or less relevant.

To be sure, the indefinite extension of the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons (NPT), the opening for signature of the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty and the upcoming entry into force of the Convention on the prohibition of chemical weapons have strengthened the international community's determination to fight against the proliferation of weapons of mass destruction. Yet the START II treaty has not yet entered into force, and the Convention on the Prohibition of the Development, Production and Stockpiling of Bacteriological (Biological) and Toxin Weapons and on Their Destruction lacks a verification protocol. Nor have negotiations begun on a cut-off convention to ban fissile materials.

Under the Treaties of Tlatelolco, Rarotonga, Bangkok and Pelindaba and the Antarctic Treaty, the southern hemisphere has become a nuclear-weapon-free zone. The region of Latin America and the Caribbean was a pioneer in identifying means to keep the region free of the scourge of nuclear weapons. Indeed, this year Latin America and the Caribbean are proudly and joyfully marking the thirtieth anniversary of the Treaty for the Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons In Latin America and the Caribbean — the Treaty of Tlatelolco. This was made possible by the efforts and initiatives of Mexico, by a long process of building mutual trust and by the resurgence of democratic institutions in Latin America and the Caribbean.

Now we note with satisfaction that other regions have also opted to shut out the use or threat of use of nuclear weapons, thus stripping those weapons of their legitimacy. In this connection, it is useful to recall that the Final Document of the 1995 Review and Extension Conference of the States Parties to the Treaty on the Non-proliferation of Nuclear Weapons (NPT) reiterated the value of nuclear-weapon-free zones and their contribution to the strengthening of international peace and security.

Since the preparatory process for the 2000 NPT Review Conference is already under way, the international community should promote the establishment of nuclear-weapon-free zones, together with the strengthening of security guarantees by nuclear-weapon States.

The Argentine Republic favours measures to bolster regional and international peace and security, especially those that expand the machinery for conflict prevention, promote the non-proliferation of weapons of mass

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This record contains the original texts of speeches delivered in English and interpretations of speeches delivered in the other languages. Corrections should be submitted to original speeches only. They should be incorporated in a copy of the record and be sent under the signature of a member of the delegation concerned to the Chief of the Verbatim Reporting Service, Room C-178. Corrections will be issued after the end of the session in a consolidated corrigendum.

destruction and ensure the effective application of the system of the United Nations Charter.

The proliferation of regional conflicts and the resurgence of instability in various areas make it necessary for the international community to focus its attention on an area that gains less attention but that is the cause of equal concern: conventional weapons. Article 51 of the Charter enshrines the inherent right of individual or collective self-defence, which presupposes that States are entitled to buy or manufacture weapons with which to defend themselves. But States must make careful and moderate use of arms transfers, paying particular heed to the excessive availability of such transfers and their potentially destabilizing effects, especially at the regional level.

We therefore consider that there is a responsibility to exercise effective control over international arms transfers so as to contribute to United Nations efforts to reduce tension, resolve regional conflicts, halt the arms race and achieve disarmament. It would thus be useful for the media to focus their concern on these major issues. Two weeks ago, a prestigious seminar described the risks of the lack of adequate control of arms sales; today, in fact, *The New York Times* published an editorial underscoring these concerns.

Confidence- and security-building measures, especially transparency in the arms sphere, are thus of particular interest in terms of guaranteeing the effectiveness of preventive diplomacy that would ensure international peace and security. Here we must stress the importance of all unilateral, reciprocal and multilateral arms control measures.

Argentina firmly supports all measures or instruments that promote greater transparency in the arms sphere. Exchanges of information, in particular, are an important and relatively easily implemented system — so long as the information is made public through the United Nations Secretariat. Argentina also attaches great importance to the process built around the United Nations Register of Conventional Arms. Similarly, we support efforts to conclude regional security and confidence-building agreements, a commitment to regional and subregional integration processes, and the renunciation of the development of defensive-offensive capabilities posing a potential threat to neighbouring countries.

In this context, Argentina supports a conventional-arms balance in a region, with appropriate control and verification measures and an agreement that would further the common objective of retaining only military capabilities needed for defence and for the fulfillment of international commitments, always mindful of the interests of the countries involved.

The current transitional phase entails the adaptation and redefinition of the United Nations, of regional structures, of States and of institutions to correspond to the new international conditions. Dialogue and consultations must help bring about a convergence of the views on the basis of which the future security and disarmament system will be formed.

In this context, and as we have noted at previous substantive sessions of the Commission, we must carefully study the question of a fourth special session of the General Assembly devoted to disarmament. In the view of Argentina, before deciding to convene the special session, and after having carefully studied its financial implications, it would be advisable to ensure the proper preparation of the session and provide it with some real content so that we do not repeat past mistakes. Thus, the agenda would have to be balanced between nuclear and conventional disarmament. As to the date for a fourth special session on disarmament, we should be mindful of the timetable of other disarmament meetings so as to avoid any overlap in the consideration of these issues.

Three years before the turn of the twenty-first century, we must face the question of how the United Nations is to respond to the challenges of the next 100 years. Disarmament, non-proliferation and arms control continue to be of crucial importance on the international agenda. Maintaining multilateral efforts to address these issues is a major challenge.

Argentina is convinced that it is possible, by renouncing the use of force in the settlement of international conflicts and on the basis of respect for fundamental freedoms, democracy and human rights, to forge a plan for universal coexistence that will ensure the stability and development of mankind.

It will take the full commitment, practical participation, political will and courage of the entire international community to take the necessary decisions or order to create a different sort of climate.

In conclusion, I would like to say that the delegation of Argentina will lend all its support to the work of the Disarmament Commission with a view to pursuing tangible progress, as was achieved at past substantive sessions with the valuable document "Guidelines for international arms

transfers in the context of General Assembly resolution 46/36 H of 6 December 1991".

Ms. Arystanbekova (Kazakstan) (*interpretation from Russian*): I would like to associate myself with the congratulations being offered to you, Sir, upon your assumption of the important post of Chairman of the Disarmament Commission at this session. I would like to express my conviction that, under your skillful leadership, it will be successful and fruitful.

The delegation of Kazakstan has always with the greatest attention followed the important and serious questions inscribed on the agenda of the Disarmament Commission. The efforts of the international community to bring about a nuclear-free world and to strengthen international security have recently borne some fruit. The extension of the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons (NPT) in 1995 was an outstanding event in the area of strengthening the non-proliferation regime for weapons of mass destruction.

One of the most important international documents — the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty — was opened for signature last September. An international political consensus in favour of the permanent cessation of nuclear-weapons testing received tremendous support. While paying tribute to all the States that took part in the preparation and adoption of these historic decisions, we believe it is necessary to point to the significant contribution of my own country to the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons and the cessation of the testing of this deadly weapon.

Kazakstan has had a policy of banishing nuclear weapons from the very first day we achieved independence. It has halted the testing of the deadliest weapon in the history of mankind on its territory and has closed once and for all the nuclear-test site at Semipalatinsk. The renunciation of all forms of nuclear weapons was a natural choice for a country that has suffered so much from nuclear tests, the consequences of which have had such a pernicious effect on the life and health of our people and on the ecological balance of vast areas of our country.

I would like to dwell on some items on the agenda of this session of the Disarmament Commission in further detail.

Article VII of the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons (NPT) and paragraphs 5, 6 and 7 of the Principles and objectives for nuclear non-proliferation and disarmament proclaimed at the 1995 Review and Extension Conference of the NPT established a sound legal foundation for creating new international nuclear-weapon-free zones on the basis of agreements freely entered into between the appropriate States for the purposes of strengthening peace and security on the global and regional levels.

Kazakstan believes that an important factor for all countries that have declared themselves nuclear-weapon-free zones is the undertaking by the nuclear Powers to observe the nuclear-free status of the zones and to provide guarantees of nuclear security to its States participants. As is known, such guarantees were given to Kazakstan in 1994 and are similar in content and juridical force to those enjoyed by the participants in nuclear-weapon-free zones. Nevertheless, Kazakstan has made an appreciable contribution to the cause of nuclear disarmament and non-proliferation and supports the creation of a nuclear-weapon-free zone in Asia.

As members know, a summit meeting of the Presidents of Kazakstan, Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan, Turkmenistan and Uzbekistan was held in Almaty on 28 February 1997. The Presidents discussed problems of ecological security in central Asia. The Heads of State declared 1998 Environmental Protection Year in the Central Asian region under the aegis of the United Nations.

The Almaty Declaration was adopted at that meeting. It highlights the consensus of the signatory States of the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons on the need for declaring Central Asia a nuclear-weapon-free zone. On the eve of the fiftieth anniversary of the Semipalatinsk test site, the five Heads of State called upon all interested countries to support the idea of declaring central Asia a nuclear-weapon-free zone open to other regions.

The Declaration points to the efforts of the Central Asian States, which, despite serious economic difficulties, have been undertaking considerable efforts to improve the ecological situation in the Aral Sea basin, the Semipalatinsk test site and other areas affected by nuclear tests. They acknowledged the need to prepare a comprehensive programme of ecological security including the Aral Sea problem, to create a nuclear-weapon-free zone in Central Asia and to combat the leakage of nuclear technologies and raw materials.

The question of creating a nuclear-weapon-free zone in Central Asia was placed on the agenda of the international conference on the problems of the non-proliferation of nuclear weapons to be held in Almaty from 8 to 11

September 1997 to mark the fiftieth anniversary of the beginning of operations at the Semipalatinsk test site.

I take this opportunity to express my gratitude for the support which was expressed in the statements made by the Group of States of the Non-Aligned Movement and a number of other countries at the recently-concluded first session of the Preparatory Committee for the Review Conference of the States Parties to the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons in the Year 2000 for the idea of creating this zone in the Central Asian region.

Kazakstan supported resolution 51/45 C, entitled "Convening of the fourth special session of the General Assembly devoted to disarmament", during the course of the work of the main part of the fifty-first session of the General Assembly in December 1996. I wish to stress the importance of achieving consensus with regard to its goals, agenda and date. We hope that this special session will yield positive results for progress in disarmament, arms control and matters of international peace and security.

Kazakstan notes with satisfaction the steady progress made in the control and reduction of conventional weapons, in particular those with excessively harmful and indiscriminate effects.

Destabilization of the situations in various parts of the world shows us that control of the spread of conventional weapons should be strengthened and is therefore a valuable instrument of regional security. In this context, we support the United Nations Register of Conventional Arms and view it as an extremely important component of such control.

The Disarmament Commission has before it some important decisions to take on strengthening international peace and security. We are ready to cooperate constructively with the delegations of the States Members of the United Nations in order to achieve our common goals.

Mr. Choi (Republic of Korea): On behalf of my delegation, I would like to join previous speakers in extending my most sincere congratulations to you, Sir, on your assumption of the chairmanship of the Disarmament Commission at its 1997 session. We have every confidence that your able leadership and broad experience in the field of disarmament will help guide the 1997 substantive session of the Commission to a particularly successful and productive outcome.

Allow me also to congratulate the other members of the Bureau on their election and to thank Ambassador Wolfgang Hoffmann of Germany for his outstanding role during last year's session of the Commission.

My delegation is convinced that internationally recognized nuclear-weapon-free zones, established on the basis of arrangements freely arrived at among the States of the region concerned, are an effective instrument to promote nuclear non-proliferation and disarmament and confidence-building, and thereby help to enhance global and regional peace and security. In this regard, my delegation welcomes the recent establishment and consolidation of nuclear-weapon-free zones in various regions of the world. Furthermore, we also encourage the initiatives to establish additional nuclear-weapon-free zones in other regions and hope that more such zones can be established in the near future.

My delegation is of the view, however, that, in achieving the denuclearization of a specific region, consensus should be reached beforehand among the countries concerned. Special consideration should be given to the unique circumstances of each region, including the elements of any security mechanism in operation there. Furthermore, the establishment of nuclear-weapon-free zones should not impose restrictions on the exercise of rights recognized under international law.

My delegation would like to take this opportunity to refer to the efforts which we have made towards the denuclearization of the Korean peninsula. In December 1991, the two Koreas signed, in full agreement, the Joint Declaration of the Denuclearization of the Korean Peninsula, which entered into force in February 1992. Under the Joint Declaration, both parties pledged not to test, manufacture, produce, receive, possess, store, deploy or use nuclear weapons. They also renounced the possession of nuclear reprocessing and uranium enrichment facilities in order to further enhance nuclear transparency on the Korean peninsula. The Declaration also provided for an effective verification regime through mutual inspection and the establishment of a Joint Nuclear Control Commission. However, it is a matter of regret that the Joint Declaration has not yet been implemented. We are convinced that the Declaration, if properly implemented, will serve as an effective means to ensure peace and security on the Korean Peninsula.

Since the end of the cold war, we have witnessed many remarkable achievements in non-proliferation and disarmament. Some of the most impressive gains have been

the indefinite extension of the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons, which has strengthened the global non-proliferation regime, and the successful conclusion of the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty, marking the fulfilment of the long-held aspiration of the international community to end nuclear-test explosions once and for all. In addition, the Convention on the Prohibition of the Development, Production, Stockpiling and Use of Chemical Weapons and on Their Destruction, which provides for the elimination of a whole category of chemical weapons, is set to enter into force next week. Also encouraging is the progress being made in meetings of the Ad Hoc Group of States parties to the Convention on the Prohibition of the Development, Production and Stockpiling of Bacteriological (Biological) and Toxin Weapons and on Their Destruction. We hope that these meetings will very soon result in a legally binding verification protocol for the complete elimination of biological weapons.

The years since the end of the cold war have, indeed, brought many welcome changes. However, the international community still faces considerable threats to international peace and security. Some of the most pressing dangers include the proliferation of weapons of mass destruction, the excessive accumulation of conventional weapons and a disconcerting lack of mutual trust in various regional trouble spots.

My delegation therefore believes that it is time for us to review the most critical aspects of the process of disarmament in the post-cold-war era and to further strengthen the international efforts towards the ultimate elimination of nuclear and other weapons of mass destruction and the effective control and reduction of conventional weapons. In this regard, my delegation welcomes General Assembly resolution 51/45 C, by which the General Assembly decided to convene its fourth special session devoted to disarmament (SSOD IV) in 1999. This will enable us to set the future course of action in the fields of disarmament and arms control and will help our consideration of related international security matters.

It is our view that SSOD IV should, in a balanced manner, address all aspects of the non-proliferation and disarmament of nuclear and other weapons of mass destruction and conventional weapons, as well as the issue of transparency in armaments. We hope that a consensus can be reached on the objectives and agenda of SSOD IV in the course of our deliberations at this substantive session.

International peace and security are under threat, not only from weapons of mass destruction, but also from excessive and destabilizing accumulations of conventional weapons at a level beyond that which is considered legitimate for self-defence purposes. My delegation notes that the Agenda for Peace and its supplement stress the urgent need for practical disarmament. In this regard, we share the view that the international community should focus its attention on certain practical disarmament measures, such as the collection, control and disposal of arms, especially small arms and light weapons, as well as the demobilization and reintegration of former combatants, demining and conversion. We believe that a comprehensive and integrated approach is needed to ensure the maintenance and consolidation of peace and security in areas that have suffered from conflict, and thereby provide a basis for the effective rehabilitation and social and economic development of countries torn by conflict.

With regard to curbing illegal trafficking in conventional weapons, which is one of the most immediate problems that we need to address, my delegation is pleased to note that the Disarmament Commission, at its previous session, successfully concluded the guidelines for international arms transfers in the context of General Assembly resolution 46/36 H of 6 December 1991. We are convinced that these guidelines, the first code of conduct in this field, will contribute to enhancing transparency in international arms transfers and eradicating illicit arms transfers. However, in order for this positive new measure to be effective, each country should do its utmost to strengthen its relevant national laws, regulations and administrative procedures.

In the belief that greater transparency in armaments can improve confidence-building and security among countries, we regard the United Nations Register of Conventional Arms as an effective means to reduce mistrust, miscalculation and, consequently, military tension. In that context, my delegation strongly encourages those States which have not yet provided annual reports to the Register to do so at the earliest possible date. At the same time, we believe that we must continue our efforts to consolidate and further develop the Register if it is to be truly effective. We also encourage the opening of discussions at the regional level on the operation and development of the Register in order to initiate the confidence-building process among regional States.

In conclusion, I wish to assure you, Mr. Chairman, that my delegation is fully prepared to contribute to the successful outcome of the work of this Commission.

Mr. Adbel Aziz (Egypt): At the outset, I would like to extend to you, Sir, my delegation's warmest congratulations on your unanimous election to the chairmanship of the Disarmament Commission and to express to you my delegation's confidence that, under your capable guidance, the Commission will be able to fulfil successfully its mandate for this year. I would also like to congratulate the other members of the Bureau on their well-deserved elections to their posts.

On this occasion, I would also like to express our deep appreciation to Ambassador Hoffmann for his excellent chairmanship of the 1996 session of the Commission and to congratulate him on his new responsibilities in the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty Organization.

The credibility of the work of the Disarmament Commission has been at stake for the past few years, due to the fact that the Commission has been unable to achieve concrete results in many subject areas, most notably in the nuclear disarmament sphere. With the exception of the adoption, during its last substantive session, of the guidelines on international arms transfers, the Disarmament Commission had no concrete results.

My delegation hopes that the increase in the duration of the Commission's session from two to three weeks, together with the inclusion of new and significant items on the agenda, namely "Establishment of nuclear-weapon-free zones on the basis of arrangements freely arrived at among the States of the region concerned" and "Guidelines on conventional arms control/limitation and disarmament, with particular emphasis on consolidation of peace in the context of General Assembly resolution 51/45 N", will give more impetus towards achieving positive results in the near future.

As the Conference on Disarmament has not yet been able to agree on its agenda, the importance of the work of the Disarmament Commission at this substantive session is even more significant. In this regard, Egypt reiterates the paramount importance it attaches to the establishment of an ad hoc committee on nuclear disarmament within the Conference. Our delegation in Geneva has worked constructively in this regard and has proposed a balanced mandate for the ad hoc committee. The efforts exerted within the Disarmament Commission and the Conference on Disarmament should complement each other, with the objective of ultimately achieving the complete elimination of nuclear weapons. This is the utmost priority of the international disarmament agenda, as underscored by the first special session of the General Assembly devoted to disarmament (SSOD I). This utmost priority, however, does not diminish the significance of other disarmament matters, most notably in the conventional sphere, which we believe to be important.

My delegation is pleased to see on the Disarmament Commission's agenda for the first time an item entitled "Establishment of nuclear-weapon-free zones freely arrived at among the States of the region concerned". The topicality of this issue is gains even more significance in the light of the results achieved at the recently concluded first session of the Preparatory Committee for the 2000 Review Conference of the States Parties to the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons (NPT), which reaffirmed the conviction that the establishment of nuclear-weapon-free zones freely arrived at among the States of the region concerned enhances global and regional peace and security.

In this regard, we welcome the recent establishment of two nuclear-weapon-free zones, in Africa and South-East Asia, and congratulate the parties to the Treaty of Tlatelolco on their celebration of the Treaty's thirtieth anniversary this year. The nuclear-weapon-free-zone seminar recently held in Mexico City, organized jointly by the Agency for the Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons in Latin America and the Caribbean (OPANAL) and the Government of Mexico, has certainly provided intellectual and practical input to further enhancing the concept. We look forward to a consolidated outcome of the seminar, which, we are sure, will enrich our consideration of this item of the agenda. Furthermore, I should like to welcome the initiative of the States of Central Asia to establish a nuclear-weapon-free zone in the region, as reflected in the Almaty Declaration of 28 February 1997.

The Cairo Declaration, adopted on the occasion of the signing ceremony for the establishment of a nuclear-weapon-free zone in Africa, emphasized that the creation of nuclear-weapon-free zones, especially in regions of tension such as the Middle East, enhances global and regional peace and security. This is a vivid testimony from the African States of the seriousness of the situation in the Middle East. Unfortunately, the Middle East is still lagging far behind. The existence in Israel — the only State in the region that has not acceded to the NPT and has not declared its intention to do so — of nuclear facilities that are not subject to full-scope International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) safeguards and its operation of an ambiguous nuclear programme are self-evident causes of alarm among the

States of the Middle East. The 1995 NPT Review and Extension Conference also recognized this alarming situation by adopting a package of three decisions and a resolution on the Middle East. That package constitutes the premise of the mandate of the Preparatory Committee for the 2000 Review Conference, and we expect further steps to be taken to ensure the implementation of the provisions of the resolution on the Middle East within the NPT review process.

We expect also that the deliberations of the Disarmament Commission on nuclear-weapon-free zones will lead not only to the formulation of guidelines, but should result in specific recommendations, based on practical assessments of already established zones, in order further to enhance the concept and to promote ongoing efforts to establish further nuclear-weapon-free zones, particularly in the Middle East, thus achieving a Southern Hemisphere that is a zone free from nuclear weapons as a significant step towards a nuclear-weapon-free world.

Egypt is among the strong supporters of the convening of the fourth special session of the General Assembly devoted to disarmament. Our support is based on the need to reflect the fundamental changes in international relations following the end of the cold-war era and the emergence of a new world order based on cooperation, not confrontation, thus providing an atmosphere much more conducive to concentrating on disarmament efforts, particularly nuclear disarmament, within a well-defined time frame.

In our work on this topic, we should build on our achievements embodied in the final document of SSOD I, which constitutes a model to be followed in our preparations for SSOD IV, taking duly into consideration new developments and achievements. Particular reference should be made in this regard to paragraph 45 of the Final Document of the Tenth Special Session of the General Assembly, which states that

> "Priorities in disarmament negotiations shall be: nuclear weapons; other weapons of mass destruction, including chemical weapons; conventional weapons, including any which may be deemed to be excessively injurious or to have indiscriminate effects; and reduction of armed forces." *(resolution S-10/2, para. 45)*

We consider this the point on which we have to build — a point that would require the full positive political will of all parties, particularly the nuclear-weapon States.

Our endeavour in this regard should revolve around achieving the widest possible consensus on an agenda and dates in order to start our preparations within the Preparatory Committee, envisaged by the General Assembly to convene before the end of its fifty-first session. This necessitates, in our view, finalizing the work of the Disarmament Commission on this agenda item at this session and presenting recommendations to the General Assembly on the substance of the matter and on related procedures.

Another new item on our agenda is "Guidelines on conventional arms control/limitation and disarmament, with particular emphasis on consolidation of peace in the context of General Assembly resolution 51/45 N". There is no doubt that the topic emanates from the continued importance of regulating the flow of conventional arms. However, the inclusion of this item on the Commission's agenda should not be taken as overemphasizing the issue of small arms, which have been a subject for discussion in the Commission over the past few years, but should be seen within its natural dimensions.

The subject must be approached and tackled in a careful manner in order to avoid any duplication of work between the Commission and the work of the Panel of Governmental Experts on Small Arms and light weapons established by the Secretary-General. It should also be noted that this item touches on various aspects of the work of the United Nations as a whole, especially in transitional areas, from preventive diplomacy to peacekeeping to post-conflict peace-building. These are areas in which no concrete definitions have yet been agreed on in the United Nations. It would seem sensible, though, to restrict our consideration of the matter at this stage to a pure disarmament scope, keeping our distance from other areas that are not within the Commission's competence and that are dealt with in other appropriate and competent bodies.

Finally, we hope this substantive session of the Disarmament Commission will build constructively on the successes of the 1966 session, and to that end I assure you of my delegation's fullest cooperation.

Mr. Sychou (Belarus) (*interpretation from Russian*): First of all, Sir, I should like to congratulate you upon your election to your important and responsible post. We hope that, under your leadership, the Disarmament Commission will achieve positive results in the course of this session. In your efforts, you can count on cooperation from the delegation of Belarus.

On the threshold of the new century, the world community is faced with the immediate task of determining fundamental parametres of international order which take into account the interests of all countries and ensure them all equal security. To create this new system of international security, the nuclear Powers are working constructively on the global level to reduce nuclear arsenals with the ultimate goal of eliminating nuclear weapons, and the non-nuclear States are also taking concrete steps in their subregions and on the national level.

The global goal of complete and general disarmament has been effectively advanced by a number of recent events, some of which are mutually complementary, though they may at times diverge in their emphasis. The Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons (NPT) was indefinitely extended in 1995. The Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty was opened for signature in September 1996. The Presidents of Russia and the United States signed the Helsinki Agreements on strategic stability, nuclear security and prospects for the third round of Strategic Arms Reduction Talks (START III). We have also had the report of the Canberra Commission on the Elimination of Nuclear Weapons and new agreements on flank boundaries within the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe. We are very close to the time — 29 April this year — when the Convention on Chemical Weapons will enter into force.

Among the obviously high-priority tasks for the near future is the beginning of negotiations on producing a multilateral convention on the prohibition of the production of fissionable materials for use in nuclear weapons and other nuclear explosive devices. Such a convention would put an effective halt to the qualitative improvement of nuclear weapons and to the arms race.

An important positive factor that answers to contemporary requirements is the inclusion within the proposed mid-term plan of the United Nations for the period 1998-2001 of such activities as the monitoring and appraisal of current and future trends in the realm of disarmament and international security and the identification of problems that either accompany the process of disarmament or are engendered by it. The latter include the economic and social consequences of disarmament, environmental damage and conversion — problems that have yet to be resolved by the international community.

In the field of international cooperation in disarmament for the immediate and mid-term, we believe it is a high priority to work on including in the draft code of crimes against the peace and security of mankind crimes relating to deliberate and serious harm to the environment. Also of particular importance is the expansion of regional efforts and initiatives in the realm of disarmament as an important element of preventive diplomacy and peace-building.

Allow me briefly to address the items on the agenda of this session of the Disarmament Commission. First, I would like to refer to nuclear-weapon-free zones. It is our belief that the creation of nuclear-weapon-free zones and the movement for establishing these zones in various regions have enjoyed wide support in the international community. Through the consolidation of the existing zones and the creation of new ones, we are seeing the gradual emergence of the contours and parametres of a global system of security for the next century that excludes the use of the atom for military purposes. Belarus has consistently supported the inclusion of this issue on the agenda of the substantive session of the Disarmament Commission in 1997 and beyond. The initiative of the Republic of Belarus to create a nuclear-weapon-free space in Central Europe was motivated by the same design. It was the logical development of our own practical steps in the sphere of nuclear disarmament. It is well known that, on 27 November 1996, the territory of Belarus was cleared of the last remaining strategic nuclear missiles, as a result of which the central European region became de facto free of nuclear weapons.

The President of the Republic of Belarus sent to the Secretary-General a special message on this topic (document A/51/708) which also set forth the initiative for creating in Central and Eastern Europe a space free from nuclear weapons. The creation of this space is of tremendous importance in the strengthening of trust among States of the continent and preventing the emergence of new demarcation lines in our region. This problem was the subject of an international conference held recently in Minsk on the creation of a nuclear-weapon-free zone in Central and Eastern Europe.

The Belarus delegation is pleased by the fact the initiative for creating the nuclear-weapon-free zone in Central Europe figured in the summary by the Chairman of the first session of the Preparatory Committee for the 2000 Review Conference of the States Parties to the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons (NPT), as well as in other documents of the Preparatory Committee, which concluded its work just a few days ago. It is our belief that this idea will be further developed at this session of the Disarmament Commission, which, as it were, will be taking the baton and assuming the goal of a comprehensive

consideration of the whole range of problems in this area. And if the preparation of a treaty on a nuclear-weapon-free space in Central Europe is a result of these efforts, not only the European countries but the whole international community will stand to gain.

Nevertheless, we are not fixated on this problem alone. While we consider counterproductive the ambition to expand the geographical frontiers of the North Atlantic Treaty Organization, and while we attach particular importance to efforts to remove nuclear weapons from the territory of foreign military bases in order to limit nuclear arsenals to the territory of the nuclear States, we are also ready to hold consultations on building a balanced system of relations between Belarus and that important military bloc and to work for political, military and strategic equilibrium with all our partners.

We would like to see the atmosphere in Central Europe freed of cold-war mistrust, the confrontation of military blocs and the arms race, and become a seedbed for the strengthening of mutual understanding and trust among the European nuclear Powers in the next century.

The emergence of new lines of demarcation on the European continent would have a negative impact both on the situation there and in the world at large. It would also be viewed negatively in the Republic of Belarus, since we do not live in isolation and take a realistic view of changes in the world. Like any other State, we must adapt our policy to the conditions emerging in our region.

I should now like to refer to the question of the special session of the General Assembly devoted to disarmament. Speaking during the fifty-first session of the General Assembly as a sponsor of the corresponding resolution, Belarus views an important task of the fourth special session to be that of exchanging experiences, taking stock of disarmament negotiations in the post-cold-war period, and formulating of priority disarmament tasks on the threshold of the twenty-first century and for the longer term.

We welcome the proposal to conclude a treaty on nuclear security and stability, with the participation of all nuclear States and to proceed to an exchange of views on this question with interested States. The current problem is that of adapting the Treaty on Conventional Armed Forces in Europe to the new political and military circumstances, as well as the achievement of the substantial results in this area. Member States are lending their full support to the idea of preparing a legally binding international document that would provide guarantees against the use or threat of use of nuclear force against parties to the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons (NPT) that do not possess nuclear weapons. Among other proposals for the short term is that of convening a peace conference in 1999.

With regard to determining the mandate of the Disarmament Commission in accordance with the preparation of the fourth special session, we feel that the idea of basing ourselves on the recommendatory nature of the Disarmament Commission on this question is entirely appropriate. The taking of decisions is the prerogative of the special session's Preparatory Committee.

Belarus was a sponsor of the resolution adopted at the fifty-first session on the strengthening of peace through practical measures in the realm of disarmament. That resolution stresses in particular the role for comprehensive arms control as applicable to firearms and light weapons, enhancing trust, the demobilization and integration of former combatants, demining and conversion as factors in the maintenance and strengthening of international peace and security and promoting effective economic and social development.

Within the context of the issue of anti-infantry mines, Belarus would like to see the adoption of policies along the lines of the moratorium on the export of such mines to be instituted by the Republic by late 1997, as well as the definition of further policies in the light of real military and technological possibilities and the means for ensuring the security of our borders.

With regard to the problem of mine clearance as a whole, we wish to stress the preferability of considering this question in a broader context, not confined to that of peacekeeping operations, in order to avoid the undesirable involvement of the Disarmament Commission in a problem that falls within the competence of the Special Committee on Peacekeeping Operations. In this regard, we also wish to recall the concrete proposals we have already heard to help mitigate the most significant manifestations of this problem in various areas: the creation of a central database on mine-clearance issues, to which all information on the problem of land mines will flow; the coordination of mine-clearance programmes and the development of national potentials in this area with regard to countries where such measures are being undertaken; the supplementation of the mandates of existing peacekeeping operations through the provision of mine-clearance assistance, including in peace agreements among parties to conflicts and provisions for joint mine-clearance activities; the creation of programmes to retrain

demobilized military personnel as mine-clearance experts; and so on.

Along with other countries, Belarus is contributing to the work of a group of intergovernmental experts on firearms. We played an eager role in the work of a number of other expert groups whose proposals we hope will promote success in the Disarmament Commission's work this year.

We believe that we will have further opportunities to acquaint participants in this session more fully with Belarus's approach to the entire range of questions on this session's agenda.

Mr. Mabilangan (Philippines): I would like at the outset to express my extreme satisfaction at seeing you, Sir, as Chairman of our Commission. We know first-hand not only of your skills in diplomacy and leadership, but also of your mastery of the subject matter of our Commission as well.

Please allow me also to thank your predecessor, Ambassador Wolfgang Hoffmann, for his tireless efforts at our last session. We wish him well in his new endeavours.

We have before us a full agenda. Arriving at this agenda was no mean feat. While my delegation would have prioritized the issue of nuclear disarmament, we welcome the current three substantive items on our agenda as a positive step towards developing a better atmosphere within which we can discuss nuclear disarmament today and in the future.

The Philippines has always emphasized that discussions such as those on which we will be embarking in the next three weeks should be made within the context of today's changed world. The changes have been many. In recent years, we have been witness to developments on the disarmament front that only a few scant decades ago were mere fervent hopes tempered by practical realities. Many of these changes were effected through multilateral efforts such as those of the Disarmament Commission and the United Nations in general. In that sense, the Disarmament Commission, as a multilateral forum with a unique mandate and universal participation, has a critical role to play in building on what has been achieved in the area of disarmament.

We must not forget, though, that many of the positive developments in the field of disarmament can also be credited to regional efforts and initiatives — efforts which, if necessary, should outpace broader multilateral development. In other words, it may be desirable in some instances for the regions and nations of the world not to wait for conclusive developments in disarmament in multilateral forums to move forward.

For example, States wishing to do so can create a nuclear-weapon-free zone or strengthen already existing ones without necessarily waiting for conclusive deliberations on this issue in multilateral forums. The outcome of the work of multilateral forums such as ours, susceptible to being politicized by extreme interests and prone to watered-down compromises, need not be a prerequisite to decisive action by States or groups of States to promote disarmament.

At last year's substantive session of the Disarmament Commission, my delegation expressed its extreme disappointment over the non-inclusion of nuclear-weapon-free zones on the agenda of the Commission. Our discussions and arguments last year over whether or not to include nuclear-weapon-free zones and in what form or formulation took up much of our time. But those discussions were very revealing of the particular international and regional interests and concerns of States on this issue. This may, in a sense, serve to make our current discussion of this issue more fruitful or, at the very least, very interesting. My delegation has specific views on this issue and will participate actively when it is discussed.

I touched briefly upon the function of multilateral forums when I discussed the role of the Disarmament Commission. Our second agenda item deals precisely with what could be an important and critical disarmament forum, a forum with the potential to prove the worth of the multilateral arena in moving forward on disarmament — that is, if given the chance.

My delegation has specific substantive views on the role of the fourth special session of the General Assembly devoted to disarmament (SSOD IV) and ideas for its agenda. In this regard, my delegation will participate actively in the deliberation on this issue. I would like, at this point, to discuss briefly the concerns of some delegations that may put at risk the critical opportunities and challenges of SSOD IV.

The concern over expense is a legitimate one. My delegation is convinced that not only is the expense well worth it, but that it can be kept within reasonable means. But I am aware that these points may not suffice in gaining consensus on this issue. In this regard, my delegation

suggests that we review the possibility of the Disarmament Commission studying how best to rationalize the length and duration of some disarmament-related meetings with a view to applying the savings towards holding SSOD IV and the meetings of its preparatory committee. My delegation would even go so far as to consider the possibility of forgoing a session or two of the Disarmament Commission and applying the savings to SSOD IV or devoting part or all of a substantive session to meetings of the SSOD IV a preparatory committee. We fully understand that it would be necessary to revisit the mandate of the Disarmament Commission as enshrined in the appropriate documents.

Please allow me to hasten to add that my delegation expresses this view with the highest respect for the Disarmament Commission and the particular and general importance and significance its respective members give it. This proposal should in no way be seen as giving any less importance to the Commission. We also understand that some may view this as not qualifying as a substantive issue for this session of the Commission.

The third issue before the Commission is one that bears directly on current problems and tensions in many regions. Practical measures are needed to reduce existing conflicts and to reduce potential ones. For those regions that enjoy peace and stability, engaging in and developing conventional-arms control, limitation and disarmament is a proven and sure way to maintain peace. In addition, aside from the direct benefit of enhanced security, the very exercise of addressing conventional arms concerns contributes to strengthening confidence, trust and political relations that translate to greater cooperation on other issues.

At this point, I would like to emphasize that, while there is a universal aspect to the problem of conventional-weapons control and disarmament, there are also regional and local facets to these problems that must be given due attention.

As with the other two issues before us, my delegation will participate actively when this issue is discussed.

The Chairman (*interpretation from Spanish*): There are no further speakers inscribed on my list. I shall now call on those representatives who wish to speak in exercise of the right of reply. I remind members of the Commission that General Assembly decision 34/401 provides that

> "The number of interventions in the exercise of the right of reply for any delegation at a given meeting should be limited to two per item";
>
> "The first intervention in the exercise of the right of reply for any delegation on any item at a given meeting should be limited to 10 minutes and the second intervention should be limited to five minutes." *(decision 34/401, paras. 9 and 10)*

Mr. Kim Chang Guk (Democratic People's Republic of Korea): The South Korean representative very carefully made mention some time ago of the non-implementation of the Joint Declaration of the Denuclearization of the Korean Peninsula. This Declaration was signed by the North and the South, so when the South Korean representative said that this Declaration is not being implemented he tried to imply that our country is not implementing it. It is therefore my duty to exercise the right of reply to his statement. In fact, my statement is to give to the third parties a correct understanding.

After the Korean War, the United States introduced nuclear weapons into South Korea with the connivance of the South Korean authorities. Our country proposed in the 1970s and 1980s to turn the Korean Peninsula into a nuclear-weapon-free zone and demanded that the nuclear-weapon States guarantee it.

In 1992, the North and the South signed the Joint Declaration of the Denuclearization of the Korean Peninsula. However, it could not be fully implemented. Why? It is because the United States is providing a nuclear umbrella to South Korea and because, at the same time, the South Korean authorities begged outside forces to provide it with a nuclear umbrella.

I therefore think that the South Korean representative's argument is contradictory. We have learned from experience that the problem of nuclear weapons on the Korean peninsula can be solved solely between the United States and our country. In 1994, we signed the Framework Agreement with the United States of America.

The South Korean representative said that the Joint Declaration of the Denuclearization of the Korean Peninsula is not being implemented. However, specifically speaking, his words do not coincide with the realities. We are now implementing the Framework Agreement and, through it, the Joint Declaration of the Denuclearization of the Korean Peninsula. Therefore, I assure the South Korean

representative that when the Framework Agreement is implemented fully, South Korea will also benefit from it.

Mr. Choi (Republic of Korea): My delegation does not wish to respond point by point to the allegations made by the representative of the Democratic People's Republic of Korea. Rather, I would like to express my delegation's deep regret at his comments on the Joint Declaration, which was signed by both sides in full agreement and entered into force in 1992. My delegation wishes to emphasize once again that the full implementation of the Agreed Framework, the International Atomic Energy Agency safeguards agreement and the Joint Declaration will greatly contribute to preventing nuclear proliferation, thereby fostering a climate conducive to peace and stability on the Korean peninsula. In this context, we sincerely hope for the cooperation of the Democratic People's Republic of Korea, so that the commitments made under those agreements can be faithfully implemented as soon as possible.

Mr. Kim Chang Guk (Democratic People's Republic of Korea): Once again, I would like to explain to the representative of South Korea that, first, the nuclear issue on the Korean peninsula could be completely resolved between the United States and our country. South Korea has no say at all on the issue of nuclear weapons; it has no prerogative on this matter. Secondly, we are now implementing the Agreed Framework, which was signed by the United States and our country. If the Agreed Framework were fully implemented, the provisions of the Joint Declaration of the Denuclearization of the Korean Peninsula could also be fully implemented. The South Korean authorities should not, therefore, hinder the implementation of the Agreed Framework, but cooperate for its fulfilment.

The meeting rose at 4.25 p.m.